

Students' Perspectives of Assessment and Learning

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ABSTRACT Students often complain that higher education promotes rote learning, wastes their time, and does not prepare them for their future professional roles. These claims advocate the need for a shift from a 'brain-dumping' assessment perspective to a more learner-centred approach in which students are actively engaged in the discovery or construction of knowledge. Assessment today has become a pivotal focus in promoting student learning, one that is fed by increasing calls to design curricula that provide learning environments to facilitate student learning. The above serves to summarise the ideas that form the background to this article; the article itself focuses on assessment practices that are able to engage Life Skills students at the University of the Free State in their learning. A motivational, behavioural and cognitive model of learning was utilised with a view to investigating how student engagement, learning and assessment may coexist in one particular classroom. A qualitative approach employing focus groups, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires created the opportunity to explore how final-year students in a Life Skills classroom experience learning and assessment. The findings suggest that assessment in a Life Skills classroom ought to provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge in authentic, real-life environments.